

New hardware upgrades communications for military, law enforcement

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A new communications antenna and radio site was installed atop Mount Baldy on Friday.

The project was a joint effort between the 341st Missile Wing of Malmstrom Air Force Base and the Montana Army National Guard.

The new site in the Highwood Mountains northeast of Great Falls will provide advanced digital, secure voice and data communications for all of Malmstrom Air Force Base and public safety entities.

Federal, state and local public safety and emergency responders can communicate more easily from the Montana interoperability project, according to Army guard officials.



A CH-47 Chinook helicopter from the Montana Army National Guard carries microwave dishes up to Highwood Baldy Mountain 40 miles northeast of Great Falls as part of the Wide Area Coverage Project supported by Air Force Space Command. (U.S. AIR FORCE PHOTO/STAFF SGT. EYDIE SAKURA)

The project adds another link to the interoperability backbone for digital communications that will soon be available throughout the state.

"Expanding the backbone is needed statewide, and this project is the next step in that process," said Lt. Col. Jeff Fisher, chief information officer for the Army guard.

Organizations benefiting from the upgrade include Cascade, Chouteau and Judith Basin counties, local law enforcement and emergency responders, the Montana Highway Patrol, the U.S. Forest Service and the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation.

A Chinook helicopter transported and lifted building materials and equipment because of the rough terrain at the new site.

Building materials included 34 yards of concrete, water tanks, propane tanks, prefabricated buildings and radio dishes.

Construction on the site began on Aug. 13 and is expected to be completed by the first week of September.

More information about the project is available at <http://www.interop.mt.gov/>.

<http://www.greatfallstribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2009908220311>